

# **BURKE CENTRE VRE PARKING FACILITY EXPANSION TASK FORCE**

## **Meeting 3 Summary**

The third meeting of the Burke Centre Virginia Railway Express Parking Facility Expansion Task Force began at 7:15 PM on November 19, 2003. Supervisor Bulova welcomed everyone and thanked them for participating in the task force.

After introductions, Supervisor Bulova explained that this meeting would be the last before the subcommittees begin their work. She invited people to join a subcommittee if they had not done so already, and she described the leadership roles within the committee. The committee chairmen are as follows: Jan Hedetniemi, Design Committee; Steve Schrobo, Operations Committee; and Mike Brennan, Pedestrian Access Committee. In consultation with the chairman, each committee will select a "community lead" for the north side and the south side of the railroad tracks. The topic of this meeting, Supervisor Bulova stated, was to learn more about the processes, rules, and regulations surrounding the committees' work.

Supervisor Bulova introduced Carey Needham of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services as the first speaker, and she explained that he had played a key role in the design of her office building at 9002 Burke Lake Road. Needham explained that county staff is completing the "project development" phase and is starting the "architectural consultant" phase, in which the county will choose an architectural firm to design the garage. Once a firm is awarded a contract (scheduled for spring 2004), the project will enter the "schematic design" phase. While addressing all regulatory and environmental issues, the architect will produce three to four design schemes that will be presented to the community. (Please see attachment for an explanation of the project phases and a projected timeline)

Needham also explained that the Planning Commission would hold a "2232" hearing in the intervening months. This hearing is required for all public projects to determine whether the project is appropriate given the location. The application materials go to the Department of Planning and Zoning who, in turn, make a recommendation to the Planning Commission based on the character, extent, and location of the proposed construction.

Mary Cortina asked where the project's scope has been evaluated by the county. Needham said that information has been included in the initial feasibility study. She also asked if the architect would be able to incorporate green techniques into the design. Needham said that Fairfax County has incorporated green techniques into other parking structures in the county like the Massey Building garage. Green principles are not unique, he explained, and most good architects should be able to build a "green" garage.

Jan Hedetniemi asked if the county could use a subcontractor to add specifications to the garage if the selected architect could not meet some of the task force's requests. Needham said that Fairfax County would try to accommodate the requests of the task force and would, if necessary, be able to hire a subcontractor for that purpose.

Ray Foreman asked if the work of the task force would extend beyond February. Both Supervisor Bulova and Mr. Needham said that the task force's work may go beyond the February

meeting; Needham directed everyone to look at the project timeline he distributed at the beginning of the meeting. Jan Hedetniemi indicated that the community is larger than the task force; the task force's final recommendations and the garage's final design need to be publicized to the community at large. Needham then presented pictures of parking structures in the DC metro area via overhead projector. Caryna Baker-Fox emphasized the point that the task force wanted a very "green" structure. Kevin Morse asked if the Little League had been notified about the garage's construction. Supervisor Bulova said that Art Steffen of Burke Centre worked with the Little Leagues and he is aware of the parking expansion plans; she also reminded everyone that the concept chosen by Fairfax County calls for the ball fields to be left intact.

Next, Supervisor Bulova introduced Kathy Ichter of the Department of Transportation to explain how the county proposed to deal with such issues as the displaced parking spaces during construction and the increased traffic flow. Ichter's main point was that the task force and the subcommittees need to identify their issues of concern up front so that county staff can address those issues throughout the construction process. Using the example of the newly-constructed Tysons Transit Center, Ichter explained how the police ran a crime analysis of the area before the center's construction to identify areas where crime would be a problem. With the prevailing neighborhood concerns about crime, a similar analysis could and should be run at the Burke Centre station. Ichter also highlighted the new EZ-Bus subscription bus service that is scheduled to begin on December 1; the bus should cut down on demand for spaces in the parking lot now and during construction. However, the bus will not suffice as a substitute for parking expansion.

Kate Mattice asked if the Operations Committee would cover operations during construction, and Ichter said yes – operations during construction would likely be a large part of the committee's work. Sam DiBartolo then asked if the county had an artists conception of the garage. He reiterated his position that he does not want the structure to look like a garage. Burke Centre, he said, is a community made up of two story homes, and he gave the example of the Kaiser Permanente building in Burke that had to put several levels underground to conform to this community vision.

Kevin Morse then asked what could be done if Roberts Road could not handle the increased traffic load. Ichter responded that VRE is designed to get cars off of area roads. Roberts Road might see an increase in traffic, but other roads would see a decrease in traffic. Morse said that the county is skewed to building the garage at any cost and that it is a detriment to the community. He asked why the subscription bus service could not be expanded and new stations could not be constructed. Debra Holland said that everyone should keep an open mind, but people need to be skeptical about buses after her own experiences with empty buses at the Burke Centre station. Larry Ichter of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services also explained that concerns about increased traffic have already been evaluated; Roberts Road will be able to handle the increase in VRE ridership.

Caryna Baker-Fox asked if anyone knew how much traffic had increased since the opening of the new Burke Centre Wal-Mart. Florence Naeve of Supervisor Bulova's office pointed out that the Burke Centre plan has always called for a discount store at that site even though, historically speaking, stores at that location have been unsuccessful.

Mary Cortina asked questions about the 2232 hearing. If the hearing is held in January, how can the task force contribute? Braddock District Planning Commissioner Suzanne Harsel answered that the 2232 hearing will look at three attributes of the project: character (is the structure compatible with the surrounding developments), location (is the site easily accessible), and extent (is the site large enough). Harsel explained that, to answer these questions, the task force's work does not have to be complete; the final details can be worked out later in the process.

Supervisor Bulova then introduced Fred Selden of the Department of Planning and Zoning to speak about building better pedestrian access to the station. He explained the different types of trails that are part of the Comprehensive Plan, and the language in the plan encourages the construction of trails across the county. For instance, a trail along Sideburn Branch is planned for the future.

Building trails, Selden said, is not an easy enterprise. Trails and land are expensive to build and maintain, and neighbors are not always eager to have a trail built through their community. Additionally, most people are only willing to walk short distances, so the longer a trail is, the less "return" there is on the investment because few people will use it.

The process for planning and constructing trails begins with a 2232 hearing since trails are a public construction project. In planning trails, county staff takes into consideration any anticipated development in the area and then looks to the Virginia Department of Transportation or the Fairfax County general fund for funding. Generally speaking, Selden said, funding for trails is very limited – over the past ten years, only \$4.5 million from the Fairfax County general fund have been allocated for construction of trails.

Carey Needham then finished his presentation of parking structures from the area. Following that presentation, task force members discussed garages and some attributes they would like the Burke Centre parking structure to have. Supervisor Bulova related how the Fairfax County Water Authority has disguised pumping stations throughout Fairfax County by using similar techniques to those raised by the task force.

Supervisor Bulova then turned to the schedule of subcommittee meetings and said that her office was available for meetings and members of her staff would be present on those days. She also explained the schedule for the remainder of the general task force meetings. At the final meeting, task force members will be asked to adopt recommendations based on the work of the subcommittees; those recommendations will be given to county staff to work into the project. County staff will then take the final design that includes the task force's desires to the community at large.

Supervisor Bulova adjourned the meeting at 9:05 and reminded everyone that the next meeting will be held on December 17, 2003, at 7:15 PM.

Attendees:

Supervisor Sharon Bulova  
Commissioner Suzanne Harsel  
Florence Naeve  
Robert Glass

Fred Selden, Department of Planning and Zoning

Larry Ichter, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services  
Carey Needham, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services  
Ken Lim, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services

Kathy Ichter, Department of Transportation  
Leonard Wolfenstein, Department of Transportation  
Mike Lake, Department of Transportation

Jennifer Straub, Virginia Railway Express  
Sirel Mouchantaf, Virginia Railway Express

Ms. Caryna Baker-Fox  
Mr. Mike Brennan  
Mr. Steve Brown  
Ms. Mary Cortina  
Mr. Sam DiBartolo  
Ms. Shirley DiBartolo  
Mr. Ray Foreman  
Ms. Janyce Hedetniemi  
Ms. Debra Holland  
Mr. Everett Johnson  
Ms. Sarah Jones  
Ms. Kate Mattice  
Mr. Mike McMahon  
Mr. Kevin Morse  
Mr. Jeff Nolan  
Mr. Leon Rose  
Mr. Steve Schrobo  
Mr. Tom Schwarz  
Ms. Amy Vogt  
Ms. Robin Williamson